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## Regis College Today Winter, 1990 Special Edition

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REGIS COLLEGE

# TODAY

Special Mini Edition Winter 1990



**Special Edition:  
Regis Jesuit  
Community on  
El Salvador**



## PERSPECTIVE

### Dear Friends of the Society of Jesus,

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their cook, and the cook's daughter were brutally murdered and their bodies mutilated at our sister institution, The University of Central America, in San Salvador. The Jesuits of the United States can only explain such brutality as a means of intimidation to force religious men and women not to help the poor of El Salvador.

If Archbishop Romero in March of 1981, the four US churchwomen in December of that same year, and now these Jesuits have been killed for speaking the truth, we can only imagine how many others, whose deaths would not command such publicity, have suffered the same fate.

The calling of the Society of Jesus is to embrace, in the name of Jesus, the victims of injustice, poverty, and suffering and to take up their cause. This responsibility is articulated in "Our Mission Today", an official document of our 32nd General Congregation (1974):

*There are millions of men and women in our world who are suffering from poverty, disease, and hunger brought about by the unjust distribution of wealth and resources and by racial, social, and political discrimination. Not only the quality of human life but human life itself is under constant threat. It is becoming more and more clear that despite the opportunities offered by an ever more serviceable technology, men and women are simply not willing to pay the price of a more just and a more humane society.*

Pope Paul VI affirmed this dangerous mission of the Society in his address to the members of that Congregation. He said,

*Wherever the Church [has been], even in the most difficult and extreme fields, in the crossroads of ideologies, in the front line of social conflict, [wherever] there has been and there is confrontation between the deepest desires of man and the perennial message of the Gospel, here also there have been, and there are, Jesuits.*

On behalf of the Society of Jesus, we, the Jesuits of Regis College have done everything we can to encourage our government to curtail military aid to the Cristiani government. This, regrettably, seems to be the only language that speaks clearly to the present regime in El Salvador. After prayerful discernment, we ask that you consider joining us in this effort by contacting your congressional representatives. It is our hope that such measures will bring the government of El Salvador to seek a cease-fire and a negotiated peace to the civil war. Only negotiations and the participation of both sides in a future government can assure an end to the conflict and an end to the murder of men and women who hunger and thirst for justice and speak out for reconciliation. In addition, we ask that you pray for the people of El Salvador.

As part of this special publication is the homily delivered by Rev. Vincent J. O'Flaherty, S.J., Rector of the Jesuit Community at Regis College, at a Mass in memory of the Salvadoran martyrs. May it be a source of inspiration and prayerful reflection for you.

Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration of our sisters and brothers in El Salvador. A blessed and peace-filled New Year.

Sincerely,

Regis College Jesuit Community

### **Trustee Resolution**

**January 13, 1990**

*The Board of Trustees of Regis College, a sister institution to Central American University in El Salvador, wishes to express its outrage and sorrow at the Nov. 18, 1989 murders of the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter. We abhor the use of violence against our sister educational institution and wish to express our support for the mission of the Jesuit university in San Salvador and encourage their future efforts.*



# Regis Jesuit mourns killing of 2 friends

by Sue Lindsay  
Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

The vicious slaying of Jesuit priests in El Salvador was especially poignant for the Rev. James S. Richard, a Regis College Jesuit professor who lived and worked with them.



James S. Richard, S.J.

"Every Jesuit is my brother, but these guys have faces on them," Richard said. "I knew them all."

In an interview last week, Richard spoke philosophically about the inherent dangers he and other Jesuits face in El Salvador -- but his eyes welled with tears as he recalled the moment he received the phone call telling him the tragic news.

"I am sad. Very, very sad," he said.

In 1976 and 1977, Richard lived in a house with Ignacio Ellacuria, rector of Central American University, and Ignacio Martin-Baro, the vice rector. Both were tortured and killed Thursday.

Ellacuria had been a prime target for assassination for years, Richard said.

"He was very outspoken about the human rights record of the military regimes. He was one of the brightest, intelligent individuals I've ever met."

Richard said he was closest to Martin-Baro, a University of Chicago graduate, known for his keen sense of humor. He was a leading expert on Salvadoran public opinion.

Richard said Jesuits learn to live with death threats in El Salvador. They take the risk because of the Salvadoran people.

"At the time there was much discussion about whether we should keep our mouths shut, but we decided we had to

speak out because to do otherwise would be to support those who are killing the people," Richard said.

"I remember going out into the streets at night when the only ones there were the army," he said. "You take your chances. It's a calculated risk living in El Salvador. There's always the possibility of violence. You numb yourself."

Richard said the priests considered splitting up because of the threats. "You always had your passport ready. We discussed hiding out and whether we should scatter instead of living together. In fact, I'm surprised that the fellows hadn't scattered in view of the recent violence going on there."

Richard said he doesn't think the deaths will change anything.

"Seventy thousand people have died in the past decade and that hasn't changed anything. It's part of a process that's been going on for 130 years in the post-colonial history of El Salvador. Any attempt to change social structures in that country are met with by death. You die. That's as clear as a bell."



**Circle of Support draws friends of the people of El Salvador**

*In a show of support for the people of El Salvador Regis College students, faculty and staff formed a circle on December 1 as they listened to speakers and observed a moment of silence. More than 70 participants, some wearing black armbands of commemoration, joined hands as they remembered those people who have died in El Salvador as a result of political violence. Speakers included: Religious Studies professor, Fr. James Sampson, S.J. (pictured); English professor, Dr. Carmen Casis; Religious Studies professor, Dr. John Kane; and Sociology professor, Dr. Alice Reich.*



**T**he headline in the November 19th edition of the *Rocky Mountain News* was, whether its author realized it or not, prophecy in the classical tradition: it proclaimed a stunning, completely unexpected word of truth. The headline had reference to a letter which the attorney general of the present Salvadoran government had written the day before to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. The headline read: "Clerics who side with poor must go, Pope told."

If the headline was accurate, the Salvadoran official's letter to the Pope didn't say, as we might have expected it to, that clerics who side with the Marxists, or the Communists, must go; no it is clerics who side with the poor who must go. That demand makes clear what has been true all along, that the problem in El Salvador is not Marxism or Communism but finally, first, last, always, the poor. The stance of the entrenched Salvadoran establishment has been all along that all would be well in that tiny nation if only the poor would stay in their allotted place. If only certain meddling bishops and priests would stop taking up the causes of the poor and oppressed, would stop filling the heads of the poor with those subversive notions about their great dignity as children of God, would stop telling the poor about the heritage which belongs to them as children of God, a heritage of freedom, a heritage which entitles them, while they live on this earth, to the possession of at least the basics of a decent human life, basics like food and clothing and shelter and medical care.

The bishops and priests, however, who would be true to their calling to be shepherds of the people are *committed*

# HOMILY GIVEN AT ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA CHURCH

DENVER, COLORADO  
December 1, 1989

*A Mass celebrated in memory  
of six Jesuit priests and two  
women murdered  
November 16, 1989  
in El Salvador*



Vincent J. O'Flaherty, S. J.  
Regis Jesuit Community  
Denver, Colorado

by that calling to a special concern for the poor, even to the laying down of their lives for the poor, as the Good Shepherd, Jesus, laid down His life for all poor sinners.

It is to the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, the High Priest, that we must go to find, beneath the brutality and senselessness, the true meaning of the deaths of the priests whom we remember today.

Jesus was, in the days of His life on earth, Himself a poor man. Among the many other good works He carried out on earth, He committed Himself to taking the side of the poor against a corrupt system, an entrenched establishment, both political and religious, that ground the poor down. "You scribes and Pharisees," He lashed out against the establishment, "you hypocrites! You who pay your tithe of mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law -- justice, mercy, good faith." (Matt

23/23) He became a threat to this corrupt system, this established order.

What was it that made Jesus so dangerous to the political and religious establishment of His day? In the reading we heard just now from John's gospel, Jesus, the night before His death, turned to His Father on behalf of His followers. "Keep them true to your name." He prayed. (Jn 17/11b) "Consecrate them in the truth." (Jn 17/17a) Committed to the truth Himself, He prayed to His Father to give His followers, exposed to the hypocrisy, the oppression and corruption of their society, that same commitment to the truth - the truth that God

was their common Father, the Father of all humankind, that life on this earth was a pilgrimage to a lasting city, on the way to which the human family was to learn to free its powerful instinctual drives -- with their potential for so much good, so much evil -- for the service of selfless love, a love that placed each member of that family always at the service of all the others.

It was the truth that Jesus told and the love that He practiced and taught which brought down on Him and would bring down on His followers the hatred of what He called "the world," not that world that His Father had made good and that He had come to save, but that world which was enslaved to all its powerful instinctual drives, drives which propelled that world to pitilessness and murder. "I passed on your word to them," Jesus prayed to His Father the night before He died, "and the world hated them, because they no more belong to the world, than I belong to the world." (Jn



*Their crime  
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place at the  
wrong time.*

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17/14) The men of His time who had given themselves over to that brutal world quickly came to see that no truce was possible between their world and His. And so, the gospels tell us, they "went out and began to plot against Him, discussing how to destroy Him." (Matt 12/14)

When they brought Him before the local representative of the great superpower of the day, the Roman Empire, they trumped up false charges against Him. They politicized His motives, making him out to be an insurgent. "He is inflaming the people," the chief priests called out. (Lk 23/5) "If you set Him free, you are no friend of Caesar's." (Jn 19/12) And so He was put to a brutal, senseless death. And with that the destiny of the human race, bent on its own destruction, changed direction. For He made of his dying an act of saving love on behalf of all humankind, including the people who killed Him.

Ever since the death of the Lord, authentic followers of His, true to His word, have committed themselves to die, if it came to that, in the cause of truth and love and of the poor and oppressed and each to make of her or his death what their Lord's death had been, an act of love joined to His on behalf of the entire human family, including the very people who murdered them. These martyrs have come from every century, from every walk of life, every corner of earth, in our time from El Salvador, where, in the March of 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was shot down while saying Mass, his commitment to the cause of the poor having taken fire as he viewed the slain body of his Jesuit friend, Rutilio Grande. By whom were Romero and Grande murdered? Ten years later, we still don't know. On December 2 of

that same year, nine years ago tomorrow four American women, Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clark, Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan, a young laywoman, in El Salvador because of their commitment to the poor, were raped and murdered. By whom? We don't know. Two weeks ago in El Salvador two people whom we remember at today's Mass were murdered, Julia Elba Ramos, not, as originally reported, the cook at the Jesuit residence but rather the wife of someone who worked at the Jesuit University and her seventeen-year-old daughter, Celina, who had taken shelter in the Jesuit residence. Their crime against the establishment was that, like the Holy Innocents, they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. By whom were they killed? We don't know. In the same hour, the six Jesuits whom we remember this afternoon were gunned down -- Ignacio Ellacuria, Segundo Montes, Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, Amando Lopez, Ignacio Martin Baro and Juan Ramon Moreno,

the oldest of these men seventy-one, the youngest forty-seven. These Jesuits in El Salvador, the nation named for Jesus the Savior, had, according to a recent reformulation of its Mission by the religious order to which they belonged, committed themselves to "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement." University men, scholars, they were attempting through their research and teaching to help change the economic, social, and political structures which have crucified the land named for The Savior for generations, during the long course of which a few incredibly wealthy families have owned most of the land while several million of their desperately poor fellow human beings have scratched out a sub-human existence wherever they could. It has been a land ripe for revolution,

for violence.

To complicate enormously the formidable task the Jesuits had set themselves of helping with their particular gifts to change this institutionalized injustice, there has been the chronic, ongoing intrusion into the life of this small country on the part of the mighty Superpower to the north, your land and my land, anxious for its national security, paranoically regarding as Communists, agents of the Evil Empire even, perhaps especially, people attempting to help the poor, a Superpower very protective of American business interests, ah, American business interests, reluctant to let go its economic grip on this and other countries in the region, which the United States of America has come somehow to regard as its colonies.

TIME magazine, which I have never heard accused of fomenting Central American revolutions, in its most recent issue, speaking of the United States of America's support for El Salvador which began in the early 1980s, states, "Nearly



ten years and four billion dollars later, there is still no peace. The causes of El Salvador's violence have not gone away. By key measurable standards, from per capita income to infant mortality, the country is worse off today. Instead of helping win the peace, U. S. money has in large part financed an unwinnable war...El Salvador's armed forces, nourished by American dollars, bear primary responsibility for the country's scandalous human rights record." (TIME, Dec 4, 89, p. 51)

In the face of such evils within and obstacles from without the tiny nation, these men lived out their commitment to the cause of truth and love, of the poor and the oppressed day in and day out for most of this decade.

Openly calling for a change in the unjust social structures of the nation, but firmly committed to non-violence, they became accustomed through the years to being called Marxists, Communists, agitators, fomenters of revolution and rebellion. They lived under constant threat of death. They knew they would eventually be killed.

And two weeks ago yesterday they were shot down, and, in a demoniacally appropriate gesture, those who shot them down tore the brains from their heads. Do we get the point? These men had been fighting institutionalized injustice with their brains. It was their commitment to the pursuit of truth that had to be stopped.

That commitment engaged them actively in one of the most tragic events of our time, the passion of Central America. Each of us in this church today has a choice to make concerning El Salvador. We have to choose either to commit ourselves somehow to the Salvadoran peoples' struggle for peace with justice or to take the stance of unconcern. There is no middle ground. Unconcerned people shrug off El Salvador, the cries of the poor and oppressed. "These are not my problems," unconcerned people say. Or they take refuge in the cop-out of despair. "Nothing can be done about El Salvador," they say, "the situation is hopeless."

Each of us, in the face of these deaths of men and women like ourselves has to ask herself, himself, "Do I care about why these people have died, care enough to pray for them, for their murderers, for the stricken land they died in, for the poor for whom they died, for the 70,000 Salvadorans who have died so far in the civil war? Do I care enough to write my representatives in Congress to demand that the flow of lethal money to El Salvador be halted, care enough to acquaint myself as well as I can with what actually is going on in El Salvador, with what my country, the United States of America, is doing to that tiny nation and its people? Or am I, to be perfectly honest, unconcerned? These are important questions to put to myself, questions of life and death, spiritual life, spiritual death.

Let the final word on commitment come from an older brother of the Jesuits who died in El Salvador, one of the sixteenth century Jesuit martyrs whom we also remember today, Edmund Campion.

In the final months of his secret mission to preach the Good News in his homeland, England, from which Catholic priests had been banished, the final months also of his life, he wrote a document which he called "A Challenge to the Privy Council," but which came to be known popularly as "Campion's Brag." It was circulated widely and precipitated a nation-wide manhunt for Campion which was to result in his capture and trial, at which he was accused of being a member of a secret league of Jesuits bent on overthrowing the Throne. Condemned to death for treason, he was hung, drawn and quartered.

The passion of Campion's commitment to his people and their salvation burns in the "Brag." He ends it with words which express vividly the same motives exactly which four-hundred and eight years later would burn in the hearts of his fellow Jesuits in El Salvador, the same motives, for that matter, which one-thousand five-hundred and eighty one years earlier had burned in the heart of their and our oldest brother, the Lord

Jesus Christ as He went to His death, words which get to the essence of what it is to be committed.

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*Touching our Societie, (Campion wrote) be it known to You that we have made a league - all the Jesuits in the world, whose succession and multitude must overreach all the practices of England - cheerfully to carry the cross You shall lay upon us, and never to despair of Your recovery, while we have a man left to enjoy Your Tyburn, or to be racked with Your torments, or consumed with Your prisons. The expense is reckoned, the enterprise is begun; it is of God, it cannot be withstood. So the faith was planted; so it must be restored.*

*If these my offers be refused, and my endeavours can take no place, and I, having run thousands of miles to do you good, shall be rewarded with rigor, I have no more to say but to recommend your case and mine to Almighty God, the Searcher of Hearts, who send us His grace, and set us at accord before the day of payment, to the end we may at last be friends in heaven, when all injuries shall be forgotten.*

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(See Waugh, Evelyn, *Edmund Campion* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company: 1948), Appendix: *Campion's Brag*, pp 238-239)

*Note: Annually on December 1, at Masses in churches and residences of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuit Order) throughout the world, Sts. Edmund Campion and Robert Southwell, sixteenth-century Englishmen and Jesuit priests, and their companions, all martyrs, are remembered. The proper of the Mass in their honor was used in the Mass at which this homily was given. Scripture passages used at the Mass in memory of the English martyrs are: Isaiah 53/3-11 and John 17/11b-21.]*



# Fighting fierce in El Salvador

*800 dead, 1,600 wounded in latest offensive*

**SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP)** -- Warplanes bombed rebel positions in parts of San Salvador and troops battled guerrillas block by block yesterday to break the largest offensive of the decade-old civil war.

Reports on fighting in the countryside were sketchy, but at least 800 people have died and 1,600 have been wounded since the offensive in all 14 provinces began Saturday night.

Armed men, meanwhile, entered the grounds of Jose Simeon Canas Central American University before dawn and killed and mutilated six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her 15-year-old daughter.

The government denied responsibility for the killings and said an investigation was under way. In Washington, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater condemned the killings as "outrageous."

President Vinicio Cerezo of Guatemala yesterday proposed that the Or-

ganization of American States send a delegation to El Salvador to negotiate a cease-fire. He said such a truce should be supervised by U.N. forces.

Guerrilla leaders have acknowledged they cannot win the 10-year-old war militarily but launched the offensive to prove the army also could not win and that rightist President Alfredo Cristiani would be unable to govern without a role in government for their Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.

Although only 1,500 guerrillas are thought to be involved in the attack in San Salvador, the entire capital of one million people seemed besieged. Virtually nothing was open and the sounds of combat were everywhere. A-37 attack jets screamed overhead, followed by thundering explosions as bombs dropped.

Residents of one neighborhood who had been without food for days looted a marketplace.

"We have no food, no money, nowhere to go," sobbed Adilia Hernan-

dez, from Zacamil, a northern neighborhood held by the guerrillas since Saturday Night.

Amnesty International, the London-based human rights group, said 50 civilians took refuge yesterday in a suburban church. The church was surrounded by troops and there are three Jesuit priests inside, the rights group said. The report could not immediately be independently confirmed.

The siege came hours after a witness said uniformed government troops killed the six Roman Catholic priests. The government denied the accusation and said the crime was "intended to destabilize the democratic process and increase even more the climate of anguish" created by the rebel offensive.

The guerrilla offensive was launched three days after the guerrillas canceled peace talks with the government following a Oct. 30 terrorist bombing that left 10 dead at a union hall.

The guerrillas called for an uprising to topple Cristiani. The U.S. backed government has declared a rebel offensive a failure and insisted the guerrillas do not control any significant territory.

## Six slayings are latest in attacks on Jesuits

**SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP)** - The assassination of six Jesuits yesterday was the latest attack against their order in Latin America, where conservatives have viewed them as dangerous revolutionaries for two centuries.

It was not the first attack on the Society of Jesus in this Massachusetts-sized country, which is wracked by a decade-old civil war that has claimed more than 70,000 lives.

The Revs. Ignacio Ellacuria, rector of Jose Simeon Canas Central American University; vice rector Ignacio Martin-Baro; and educators Amando Lopez, Juan Ramon Moreno, Joaquin Lopez and Segundo Montes were slain and mutilated early yesterday.

Two witnesses said government soldiers in uniform were involved, according to the Rev. Jose Maria Tojeira, the Jesuit order's superior for Central America. The government denied the charges.

The Jesuit university, one of the region's most prestigious institutions of education, had been the target of two previous attacks this year.

On April 29 and July 22, bombs exploded at the entrance of the university and in the printing shop where it publishes its academic tracts and monthly review of social and political issues.

No one was injured in those two bombings, but damage to property was

considerable. The university blamed rightists in the military.

"This attack is the latest in a long chain, constantly incited by an insidious campaign of calumny and libel against this institution and the Jesuits who work here," said a university statement July 22.

The April and July bombings followed publication in rightist newspapers of several private advertisements labeling Ellacuria, Martin-Baro and Montes apologists for leftist rebels of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.



Tuesday January 9, 1990

# Church: Salvador should tell all

*Associated Press*

## **SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador -**

President Alfredo Cristiani's acknowledgment that the military was responsible for killing six priests at Central American University did not go far enough, its new rector said yesterday.

"He only confirmed what we have said from the beginning. We need something more complete," said the Rev. Francisco Estrada of Cristiani's announcement Sunday night.

Military and government officials declined to return telephone calls seeking elaboration on the president's admission that soldiers were responsible for the Nov. 16 slayings of six priests

and educators and two women who lived on the Jesuit-run campus.

Cristiani, in a five-minute nationwide address, did not say who has been implicated in the crime, or give any idea of the number of assailants or their rank.

The head of El Salvador's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Sunday night that 47 members of an elite battalion, including two officers, were being questioned in connection with the slayings.

But it was unclear yesterday if those soldiers and officers are the ones referred to by Cristiani.

The United States yesterday praised Cristiani's announcement, but to Estrada, the speech "was not relevant."

"It is not enough that they (the armed forces) put forward a sergeant. The question is, who ordered that sergeant to do it," said Estrada, who replaced the Rev. Ignacio Ellacuria, one of those murdered, as rector.

Cristiani said a commission has been created "to determine the exact circumstances (of the slayings) and clarify the truth in its complete magnitude."

Cristiani said investigators would "deduce responsibilities and make sure justice is done."

# Regis College

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